Gov. Wilson on Commission Government

Democratic Candidate For President Tells of His Way to Down Bosses And Bossism in American Cities

WILSON ON BOSSES AND BOSSISM

The American boss is one of the most characteristic and inevitable fruits of American politics.

Whatever the kind of boss there will be a boss. We have got to have the machine under present conditions or go out of politics. What troubles us is not that the machine controls the action of the government so much as that we see shadowy shapes behind the machine.

sey, choice of the Democratic party wall if you choose if you will only take for President of the United States, is the pains to buy a copy of that old justly regarded as one of the progress- cartoon by Tom Nast which repreive political thinkers of the day. He sented the Tweed ring in New York is an ardent advocate of the commis- as an actual circle of men, each with sion form of government for cities, his thumb to his neighbor, the title In the following interview in the New of the picture being 'Twan't Me.' We York Sun, he discusses at length the have invented or stumbled upon a misgovernment of American cities Twan't Me' system of government and and the commission government as what we are in search of is a 'tis you' a remedial measure. Naturally, none system of government. of the drawbacks of this form of gov- "We can not fix responsibility beernment are brought out, but it is a cause responsibility depends upon cerlucid exposition of the principles by tain things. It depends upon obviousa strong advocate. Honolulu's civic ness in the process of government. It problems are demanding attention depends upon intelligibility in its just now, and whether or not one methods. It depends upon openness agrees with Gov. Wilson, the follow- in the counsels of governments?" ing interview is of much interest.

"The hopes of America have been! disappointed in American city govern- trol. I do not understand the re-conment. There was a time-you do not ing of those persons who say that have to be very old to remember it- cratic. I do not know anything that when there was a universal compla- cratic. I do not kno wanything that cency in America about our success in is undemocratic, except that which American would admit that anywhere And I stand for the proposition that in the world there were to be found anything that secures control by pubgovernments organized more success- lic opinion is fundamentally and radifully than they were organized in cally democratic. I do not have to America. But we have got over that argue that. It is too obvious. complacency. We have had to admit : the fact that most of the well-gov- essentially un-American thing, inaserned cities of the world are on the much as it is in many of its aspects a other side of the water and that many secret and despotic thing, but I can of the worst governed cities of the not agree that it was not a natural civilized world are on the side of the growth of American politics. We have

"I take it that the problem that we ent conditions or go out of business. I have set ourselves is the problem of do not mean that we have got to have responsibility. We want governments a corrupt machine, but we have got which respond to public opinion and to have a machine, an outside organwe have not been able, to get them. ization, an organization outside of this

Gov. Woodrow Wilson, of New Jer- The explanation you can hang on your

Of the machine and the boss Governor Wilson said:

"We want to unify in order to tonmatters of political organization. No prevents the people from controlling. "The machine is in one sense an

got to have the machine under pres-

necessary that somebody else should tion the legitimate organization of our boss them? They have got to be sugreat parties, but every man should and the choice is with us as to the danger of being controlled by a manot stop with the machine. What those who do not appear upon a polit-

peppercorn for the general interests of Governor Wilson said:

GOV. WOODROW WILSON, OF NEW JERSEY.

complicated piece of machinery, whose ous oligarchy that could possibly be single command shall bring order out set up has been set up in the United of chaos, whose united will shall unify States. and control the governments we have "How do you explain it that there

fruits of American polities. You can Democratic and to the Republican ma- as those commissioners got to work not put him out of business as your chines? Why it all goes back to that it was shown which cities were fortu- all your power in one man-the mayor? CORNER ALAKEA AND governments are at present organized. absolutely true but cynical remark at- nate; and there is the recall. Under For the very good reason that very You can get disgusted with a partic- tributed to a politician in New York our system of commission government, often a single man has too many amular boss, and you can put that one city, who said, There ain't no politics out of business; for you can see to it in politics. Machines are not divided an opportunity to identify your unde- not debate things with himself, out that someone more honest or more in by principle, they are divided by opaccord with year principles takes his portunity. there will be a boss. That is the rea- to distinguish in my own thoughts, beson why we have a special political or- tween the machine and party organganization and machinery in this coun- ization. They are absolutely different try which exists nowhere else. No- things. A machine is a little coterie lutely necessary that it should exist. | are using the party organization for

controls the action of our government there is the jungle." so much as that we see shadowy shapes behind the machine.

society, I know that the most danger- "Candidates are not elected by plu-

place; but whatever the kind of boss, "I want you to distinguish, as I try here else has it been made abso- of capable and designing men who "You have this problem therefore their own individual purposes. I No Are you going to boss your govern- man should be ignorant or stupid or ments or are you going to make it unjust enough to bring into condemnaperintended, they have got to be given be intelligent enough to know that a unity and coordination of purpose, those organizations constantly stand in source from which these forces will chine, and that the machine in its come, because we know that they do turn is controlled and employed by troubles us is not that the machine ical form at all. This is the beast and

Governor Wilson believes in concentrating authority in a few men and "But when I know that these men holding them responsible. Speaking of may be in the pay of those who are the Walsh bill, which gave any city working for their own profit and spe- in New Jersey the right to establish cial interest, and who do not care a a commission form of government,

ralities, but are elected by majorities. Necessarily if one man or two is elected he must be elected by a majoritya majority of those who vote. Under the New Jersey plan when there is a vote on the adoption of the commission plan of government at least 30 per cent. of the registered voters of the city must vote in the affirmative in order to adopt it. We have thus tried to avoid the domination of minorities and make everything operative by the majority of votes.

"I am expounding a thing which applies to all conditions of American political life. The thing we are looking! for in city government we are looking for in every kind of government in America. The ways of finding it are not the same, but the quest is the same. We are seeking for responsible action in response not to special interests or to parts of public opinion, but to the whole opinion of the nation, We are seeking to base it upon the judgment of common men. The human race is not to be saved by a rem- | great city with a great teeming popu- | combine to serve the interests of a nant; the human race is not to be lation?' I don't see the point of that one of them, or if they do saved by a few instructed persons; it question. What has the number of they combine after a debate, at is to be saved by the consciences and people got to do with it? Is a gov- you have been the audience. Pu purposes of common men. If you can ernment less safe when it is watched added to shared authority, to au not carry the instinct of the common by a million eyes than when it is which is unified without being man with you then you have done nothing to increase the forces or to size of the city seems to me to have fication of government enhance the hopes of the nation.

have adopted commission government and no city that has ever adopted it, don't succeed, you must try again until so far as I know, has gone back to you have got the biggest men that you the old form. One may ask, is there have, and then think of the distinc- time ment than concentration of organization? There is nothing more. That is the beauty of it. There doesn't have to be anything more. We say to the five men who are elected: 'The way the government under you is constituted is nothing to us. The number of people that are employed by you is nothing to us-at present. The way you organize or reorganize your depart- stand persons who say that unification, ment is your business, but we are gohow to make it work."

"The American boss is one of the do you explain the fact that the same were not particularly fortunate in their ically democratic. most characteristic and inevitable men often give money both to the choice of commissioners, but as soon sirable commission.

that a government so concentrated and thority. They can not do anything THE BEST MILK FOR simple as that would be desirable in a without doing it together. They won't

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WILSON ON COMMISSION GOVERNMENT

Some 207 cities in the United States have adopted commigovernment and no city that has ever adopted it, so far as I know, has gone back to the old form. One may ask, is there nothing more to commission government

than concentration of organization? There is nothing more. That is the beauty of it. Publicity added to shared authority, to authority which is unified

without being put in one person, is the key to the simplification of

watched by a thousand eyes? The one person, is the key to the only this to do with it, that it will be "Some 207 cities in the United States a much more severe test. You will have to try to get big men, and if they

ing more to commission govern- tion which will come to a city which is governer by its best men." Summing up, Governor Wilson sald: "Now, when we come to ask ourselves what we want in order to secure responsibility, what our object is, I hope I have sufficiently laid the foundation to make it evident what the building must be. We want to unify in order to control. I do not under-

centralization, is undemocratic. As I ing to hold you responsible for every have already stated, nothing seems to bit of it, and if it does not work out, me undemocratic except that which then we are going to try somebody prevents the people from controlling. Everything in Furnitu "Some of the cities in New Jersey lic opinions is fundamentally and rad-

"Why not do what several American cities have tried, and concentrate there is a great advantage in having bitions to serve, and a single man does loud. But, make it five or six men, or "I have heard men say, 'Do you think a dozen men, and unite them in au-

A political reformer is a p who doesn't stand in with the Loafers are wise to the fact th

Every man likes to believe that is a light sleeper-even if he hear the alarm clock.

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